

Acknowledgments

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Dr George B. Schaller, New York Zoological Society, Bronx Park, Bronx, New York 10460; J. M. C. Vasconcelos, Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal, Palácio do Desenvolvimento, Brasília, Brazil.

Visit to a Surinam Turtle Reserve

T.H. Bassett

I visited the Galibi Nature Reserve in Surinam, probably one of the most easily accessible turtle reserves for visitors in the world, in the first week of June 1978, accompanied by the resident warden, George Plak.

The first night we saw two leatherback turtles *Dermochelys olivacea* nesting, one of which obligingly laid its eggs for us by flashlight. The second night we watched olive ridley and green turtles laying, and the following morning I saw four green turtle nests being dug out and the eggs placed in foam boxes for hatching. Green turtle eggs laid below spring-tide high-water level are removed from the nests and placed in foam boxes with a layer of sand below and a nylon cloth with a layer of sand on top. The nylon is important for retaining warmth. The boxes are stored in a corrugated iron incubator house and the hatching rate is high. The baby turtles are then transferred to another foam box for 36 hours with clean sand until they absorb and clean the yolk sac.

On a routine patrol with the beach guards I saw nests of leatherback and olive ridley *Lepidochelys olivacea*, which were below the spring tide level, being located by probing, and the eggs dug out, counted and put into a fresh pit above the highest water mark. The eggs take two months to hatch and would be chilled and killed by the cooling of the spring tides. At 7.00 a.m. I had the good fortune to see a leatherback haul out and start to prepare its nest hole. But as the sun grew hotter it had to abandon the attempt. At 5.30 p.m. in the late afternoon we took the hatchlings from the hatchery and released them a mile out to sea.

The turtle nesting season is from January to July. Reservations are made with Stinasu (Stichting Natuur Behoud Suriname), c/o Surinam Forest Service, P.O. Box 436, Paramaribo, Surinam.